

Book reviews

A Singular Iniquity. The Campaigns of Josephine Butler. By GLEN PETRIE. 1971. Pp. 317, 1 figure. Macmillan, London. (£3.50)

Having just returned from South-East Asia, where organized prostitution is still traditional and where thinking people are now asking how best to deal with the problem, the reviewer welcomed the request to deal with this book.

Glen Petrie's biography of Josephine Butler and her times offers the necessary blue print for implementation of the United Nations International Human Rights Convention of 1959 in so far as it aims to reduce and eradicate the exploitation of women by pimps, ponces, procurers, police, and parliamentary decree.

Mrs. Butler (1828–1906) was born of an esteemed Whig family in Northumberland. She was an intelligent beauty of much grace and charm who saw with crystal clarity the wicked injustice of the two-standard morality in her Victorian society. The exploitation of women as embodied in the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s offended her deeply. She did not oppose prostitution *per se*. It was the regulation and organization of it, with the buying and selling of girls and young women, which rankled; no less did the *droit de seigneur* of the employers who abandoned their pregnant victims. Equally offensive to her was the abuse of police powers under the Acts, the short-sightedness and cruelty of some doctors, and the whole conception of compulsory examination of girls and women. The procuring of young girls for the use of "honest" men in high places in Government and the export of girls to the brothels of Continental capitals enraged her.

The author's thorough researches of papers, journals, and letters from a wide variety of sources are collated to give a most engaging portrait of his subject. The writing of books, pamphlets, and speeches made great demands on Mrs. Butler over many years. She sought and gained co-operation and lasting friendship amongst the highest and the lowliest in the land. She was instrumental in organizing local, national, and international meetings as well as parliamentary candidates prepared to support abolition of the inhumane Acts. Not least of her weapons was personal encounter with her adversaries. Her meeting with the chief of the moral police in

Paris is the most enlightening example. Her personal involvement in all endeavours shows a remarkable tenacity sustained over many years. The support she found in her religion and her happy marriage to an understanding husband were the constant sources of her strength and endurance. She withstood the slings and arrows of her opponents with equanimity whether they labelled her "The single individual most responsible for the spread of syphilis" or inflicted physical injury upon her. Success did not come to the Abolitionists of the Acts until 1886.

This most readable and detailed account of one of the 19th century's most forceful reformers is essential reading for venereologists everywhere.

R. S. Morton

Spirochetes in Body Fluids and Tissues. Manual of Investigative Methods. Edited by J. N. MILLER. 1971. Pp. 72, 6 figs, bibl. Thomas, Springfield, Ill. (\$5.50)

This monograph has been produced by a committee set up after the Seminar and Workshop on Spiral Organisms in Body Fluids held in Atlanta in 1969 under the sponsorship of the Venereal Disease Branch of the Center for Disease Control. Its aims are practical: to describe treponemal disease in experimental animals and to recommend standardized procedures and reagents for the demonstration of treponemes.

The description of clinical manifestations of experimentally-induced infection is brief and is limited to rabbits and monkeys. The common diseases which may affect these animals are described, with techniques for obtaining samples of blood and aqueous humour, dissection of popliteal nodes and testes, and inoculation of material. The behaviour of the VDRL, TPI, and FTA-ABS tests in animals and man is outlined. It is stated that in human sera the FTA-ABS test "is at least 96 per cent. specific". If this means that some 4 per cent. of reactive results are non-specific, this is surprising in view of the high regard in which this test is held in the United States and elsewhere.

An indirect fluorescence technique is recommended for the demonstration of treponemes, reactive human or rabbit serum diluted 1 in 5 in